

Class Struggle

The Workers' Republic Women's Liberation International Socialism

30p

Irish
Workers
Group

Irish Section of the
LRCI

No. 24 April 1991

Revolutionary
crisis in Iraq.

GDR Workers
on the march

Spring Dumps
Labour's
'Socialism'

Four-page supplement
**James Connolly and the
1916 Insurrection**

Imperialist Hands Off the Middle East Now!

BUSH TOLD the world that his war against Iraq was to assure the triumph of democracy over tyranny, civilisation over barbarism. Bush and his cronies Major and Mitterrand are liars.

In the name of "civilisation" 200,000 Iraqis, according to Pentagon estimates, were slaughtered. Many were civilians. Now that the war is over the USA admit that their hype about smart bombs and surgical strikes were so much propaganda—approximately 70% of the 885,000 tons of bombs dropped on Iraq missed their targets.

Iraq, not just Saddam Hussein's military machine, has been laid waste in this war. Children in the towns are starving. The harvest could be destroyed with no machines to collect it. Fresh drinking water is a thing of the past. Tons of sewage flow into the Tigris. Electricity supplies are still few and far between. Cholera and typhoid reap their deadly harvest. Thousands of ordinary Iraqis are without shelter, their homes destroyed by the RAF and US Airforce "heroes".

A UN mission demanded that sanctions on food and medical supplies be lifted because of the war's "near apocalyptic results upon the infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a highly urbanised and mechanised society... most modern means of life have been destroyed."

Now civil war is causing a new round of destruction, homelessness and repression. Thousands of Iraqi refugees have joined Kuwaitis, Egyptians, Filipinos and others fleeing south in a hopeless search for safety. When they reach the Kuwaiti border, or the US lines, many have been turned back and sent to certain death by the guardians of civilisation and democracy.

To their credit, rank and file US soldiers, appalled by stories that only the dogs in Basra had enough to eat because they fed on human corpses, defied orders from their officers and shared their rations with the starving victims of the bloodbath. They have ignored direct instructions from Kuwait's restored government to refuse refugees entry into the country.

The Kuwaiti rulers have author-

ised their troops to counter the generous spirit of the American rank and file soldiers by terminating refugees with extreme prejudice. When one US soldier told his colonel that he would not turn back refugees, the officer told him:

"We had an Iraqi soldier give himself up near here the other day and a Kuwaiti soldier just took him to one side, shot him in the head and pushed his body into a ditch. If you let these people through... they could face the same danger."

Yet the president remains strangely silent about the atrocities being carried out by the Kuwaiti rulers now that they have been put back on their thrones. Saddam is a torturer. But so too is the Al-Sabah family of Kuwait. Journalists report increasing numbers of unmarked graves into which are dumped Palestinian corpses, badly marked by torture. There are regular pogroms of the Palestinian quarters in Kuwait city by death squads. Yet the imperialist forces are doing nothing to prevent them.

men were employed to fit the palace with gold taps, embroider velvet cushions and restore Moroccan tiles. What an obscenity!

It is little wonder that these corrupt despots—the "rightful" rulers of Kuwait restored by the vast armies of the US led alliance—have imposed martial law on the country and have made the military governor the prime minister. Whether or not they eventually give some sort of constitutional veneer to their dictatorship it will be on

famine and flooding as the result.

These are the consequences that the imperialists are prepared to impose on the rest of the world to protect their system of exploitation and oppression. Civilisation and democracy are empty phrases for the imperialists, coined freely when they need to fool the workers of their own countries into supporting their wars of plunder.

But the struggle of the Iraqi and Kurdish people shows that the imperialist predators can't rely on always having their own way. Despite the victory that Bush, Major and their collaborators have won, the workers and poor peasants of the Gulf and the whole Middle East are preparing their revenge. We must support them by continuing to raise loud and clear in this country the demand—all imperialist troops out of the Middle East now!

That means fighting in the working class movement and among youth for solidarity demonstrations and workers action on every key issue of imperialist intervention in the Middle East. It means fighting for active support for the struggles of the Palestinians and Kurds for self-determination and material aid for the working masses of Iraq in their struggle to replace the barbarous regime of Saddam Hussein with the only power than can ultimately open the road to peace and progress in the region—the rule of the working class struggling for a socialist federation of the Middle East.

That means challenging here in Ireland the accessories to Bush's mass murder, Haughey, Bruton and O'Malley, who are determined to maintain US military facilities at Shannon and to bring Ireland more and more into military alliance with imperialism. ■



Death by starvation, disease or at the hands of the Republican Guard in Iraq, or death at the hands of the Kuwaiti troops—this is the "democratic" choice that Bush's war has granted the people of the region.

Kuwait itself is testimony to the big lie that this imperialist war was waged for noble causes. Saddam was denounced as worse than Hitler by Bush.

Daily life in Kuwait, for ordinary people, is a grim struggle for survival. Food is scarce. Water and power supplies are non-existent. Houses and public buildings remain heaps of rubble. The Al Sabah ruling clique are unconcerned. Their palace has already been restored. Workers were drafted to restore power and running water to the palace. Nightly banquets are being organised. Special crafts

their own terms and with their own wealth and power guaranteed.

Meanwhile the whole region remains literally under a cloud. In satellite pictures the smoke from the burning wells appears as a great black area that respects no borders. Acid rain and toxic chemicals will adversely affect agriculture as far away as India and could disrupt the monsoon, with

Connolly's
Legacy



Irish Workers and the Gulf War

Throughout the five months of the blockade and war against Iraq, the level of protest seen on the streets of Ireland was generally very low. The biggest national demonstration hardly touched 2,000 at the height of the war.

Apart from token statements against the war by a number of trades councils, the national leadership of the trade union movement was shamefully silent. The leaders of the Labour Party did not appear at, let alone address, the 'Gulf Peace Campaign' demonstrations which their own party supposedly sponsored.

An explanation is to be found in the strength of support for the United States and the depth of illusions in the United Nations in the working class movement. The main basis for economic expansion in the past thirty years in Ireland has been the inflow of US investment, and the trade union leadership is fundamentally opposed to any action which would alienate US investors. Silence in the face of US imperialist aggression around the world is a small price for these brokers to pay.

Ireland's role in the United Nations, indeed DeValera's role in the League of Nations before it, have been worked up into a mythology of national pride by Fianna Fáil and the ideologists of the Irish bourgeoisie for 50 years. With Irish troops serving around the world under the blue flag, with Irish diplomacy touted as significant in peacemaking over the decades, the United Nations has taken on the status of a sacred cow, alongside 'Irish neutrality'. Against such a background Bush's use of the UN as a cover for his war drive was particularly effective among the Irish masses.

Spring and DeRossa fully accepted UN security council resolutions as 'legitimate' and binding on Ireland. They supported the Blockade of Iraq under cover of which the US prepared its war. Their 'opposition' to the war amounted to little more than quibbling over what extent the UN decisions actually obliged direct military collaboration with the US. Their boldest stand was to insist that the Haughey government was not entitled to unilaterally override Irish neutrality, even for the sake of the UN, without consulting the Dáil. Haughey called their bluff, consulted the Dáil and got overwhelming support for re-fuelling US warplanes at Shannon.

Irish neutrality of course contains a progressive element of abstention from military alliances, but it has never meant ideological or political neutrality for the Irish bourgeoisie! Only a consciously anti-imperialist movement of the working class could maintain that military neutrality in the face of the relentless economic and political pressures from the US. The sacredness of 'Irish neutrality' among wide sections of the urban petit bourgeoisie led to widespread unease about Haughey's decision. The possibility existed therefore of mobilising real forces to stop re-fuelling at Shannon.

However, the Gulf Peace Campaign leaders turned their Shannon protests into an act of empty pleading with the conscience of Ireland rather than making it the focus for a call for industrial action. When union leaders were confronted in SIPTU by motions from IWG and other anti-war activists in the last week of the war, the reaction was vicious. Representing the SIPTU bureaucracy, Paul Clarke attacked as anti-democratic those who called on the union to give a lead for industrial

action at Shannon. The union, he assured us, had fully consulted its members at Shannon. They had decided to go on refuelling military planes and the union would not tolerate other elements from 'imposing' a strike mandate on them.

When the SIPTU education branch AGM voted to call for Western Troops Out of the Gulf and No Refuelling at Shannon, Clarke tried to insist that the branch could make no public announcement of its decision without the approval of the union leaders—which they would never give. He was told in no uncertain terms where to get off.

At the construction branch of SIPTU an IWG supporter similarly tried to table a censure on the union leaders for failing to mobilise in any way against the war. Union officials belonging to the CP and the Workers Party succeeded in forcing the motion's withdrawal through procedural appeals.

These events underline the vital importance of bringing into the trade union move-

ment at every level the fight for real action on every issue of imperialist aggression by the US, Britain, France etc. Without such a struggle, the concerns of the Irish masses for 'the plight of the third world' will continue to be no more than a milking

parlour for charity agencies and Church-led solidarity groups while the labour and union bureaucrats will go unchallenged in their silent collusion with capitalist imperialism and its bloody policies around the world. ■



▲ Photo Montage of Irish Anti-War campaign BY NIAMH FORAN

No To WAR IN THE GULF CAMPAIGN

From September 1990 until the 'ceasefire' of March 1st the No To War in the Gulf Campaign was dominated by the Socialist Workers Movement which fully controlled its committee. The perspective on which they based it was spelt out at an SWM public meeting in October.

They expected that as war approached there would be a spontaneous mass upsurge of anti-war feeling for which their campaign would become the focus. To that end they were explicitly opposed to raising any form of opposition to the blockade against Iraq because such a 'radical' position would alienate the many who would come out against the war for purely pacifist reasons.

This idea of waiting on events to produce spontaneous support for their campaign meant doing little or nothing from September to early January while in the US and Britain substantial demonstrations were taking regularly to the streets. Nothing was done to raise opposition to the criminal blockade of Iraq which was plainly being used as the lead-in to a major war. The IWG argued for such a campaign to be built. In TCD where we helped organise a demonstration against the blockade, the SWM opposed the building of any campaign there. Sadly, in this most political of campuses SWM's attempt to control anti-war activity for themselves ultimately meant keeping the NTWG committee so secret that it hardly existed and held no meetings in the last three weeks of the war.

Nevertheless, the political platform of the NTWG campaign did contain the vital demand for 'Western Troops Out of the Gulf'. This clearly placed responsibility for the war on the imperialist coalition and did not advocate support for the blockade nor for UN calls for Iraq to surrender Kuwait. Before the campaign opened up in January, IWG therefore attempted to participate in its committee but SWM were determined to prevent this, clearly signalling that their own organisational purposes in controlling it were more important than

Pacifist Surge

SWM's promised pacifist upsurge never materialised. The new Gulf Peace Committee upstaged the four-month-old NTWG with the first mass demonstration, but more than half of the turnout came from the 'western troops out' campaign. SWM decided over the heads of the campaign activists to affiliate to the GPC. But clearly there could be no principled agreement between the platform of the NTWG campaign and the politics of the organisations making up the GPC on the major issue of imperialist responsibility for the war and getting western troops out.

The immediate negative effect of the affiliation was that Labour's leading left, Michael D Higgins, was able to prevent the

WHAT DID IT ACHIEVE?

building of a NTWG branch in his home city of Galway by pointing out that it was affiliated to the GPC and therefore it made better sense to simply build on the basis of the GPC's platform. The degree to which SWM was prepared to build branches of the GPC instead of continuing the separate structures of the 'western troops out' campaign probably would have depended on whether SWM felt it could dominate them for its own organisational benefit. But the GPC was not going to let SWM test out such a manoeuvre.

Had this impossible 'affiliation' continued the logical development was for the NTWG campaign to put its call for western troops out in small print under the general pacifist slogan of 'No to War'. SWM made no secret of its readiness to do this, as its SWP confederates in Britain had done. In fact, the demand for western troops out disappeared altogether from the SWM-produced posters and petitions in the lead-up to the second big demonstration!

At the action groups the IWG had no difficulty in getting support for putting the 'western troops out' call back onto all literature and posters. As a distinct campaign the NTWG remained overall and in substance a principled opponent of the imperialist war drive. The 'affiliation' to the GPC never came to have any political significance in practice.

On none of their demonstrations during the war did SWM allow any representative of other far left to speak while readily handing over the microphone to CP and Workers Party figures as second-line speakers who argued support for sanctions and for Iraqi troops to withdraw. The principal speaker was SWM's McCann

who openly called for a defeat for the U.S. outside the embassy in the first week of the war. It was a position that the SWM was not to repeat in public—indeed hardly even in the small print of their paper! It forced the political contradictions between the two campaigns out in the open. The GPC demanded that affiliates give their support to a UN solution and call for Iraq to withdraw. At the Feb 2nd secretaries' meeting, all of SWM's leaders, including McCann, argued openly that they would of course agree to these conditions—while maintaining their own slogan. It was downright political dishonesty that could benefit no-one!

Deeply Alienated

The GPC 'disaffiliated' the NTWG campaign on Feb. 14th because its posters, supporting the GPC demo, had called for 'western troops out'! Ironically only one third of the 1200 marchers followed the GPC banners, the rest being mobilised by the NTWG! Most of the marchers were deeply alienated by the semi-religious gungo and poetry which emanated from the platform.

Throughout all of this plainly opportunist attempt to 'affiliate' to the Peace Campaign, the important task of placing real demands for action on the reformist leaders was actually being ignored. Specifically, the committee of the NTWG campaign resisted the idea of fighting for affiliation of official labour movement and other mass organisation. SWM argued that it was more important to have identifiable small groups of activists. More important for their own organisational purposes perhaps, but only the politically blind could ignore the vital importance of trying to

build on the basis of drawing in mass sections, however merely formal their affiliation might initially be.

The failure of spontaneous mass opposition to the war in Ireland starkly emphasised the relatively greater importance of the forces of the far left whose combined campaign was far more impressive in its limited achievements than that of the pacifist and reformist leaders. Over a dozen action groups around the country held weekly meetings with as many as 20 or thirty attending each. It led the two biggest national demonstrations and organised many local pickets.

Sadly the national campaign was only organised on an open basis four months after it should have. In retrospect the clearly anti-imperialist outlook of the vast majority of its activists proves that there existed, all along, the basis for a campaign against the blockade of Iraq from the start without losing the 'spontaneously pacifist' masses.

A democratically open conference of activists in September or October at the latest should have been the elementary basis for launching the campaign. Shamefully, its first conference did not take place until the war was actually over. The responsibility lies entirely with the SWM.

Had the war gone on it is likely that more and more could have been mobilised in protest and that a real beginning could have been made to turn the protests into action. That would have depended, however, on radically shifting the campaign away from the SWM perspective which at every point put the building of the struggle in second place to their own organisational plans. ■

Bombing Downing Street—No Way Forward

FOR THE SECOND TIME in ten years the IRA have come close to wiping out a Tory cabinet. If they had done so the IWG would have shed few tears. The Tory party is a key part of the British ruling class executive. It remains the major architect and agent of the brutal strategy of British Imperialism to smash the IRA as the embodiment of the anti-unionist revolt against the six county Orange State.

For 20 years the British Army, UDR, RUC and Orange paramilitaries have waged a war against the anti-unionist minority. They have employed every means of repression and terror from the murders of Bloody Sunday, through mass internment, juryless courts, arbitrary arrest, torture, assassination—all with the full complicity of the British ruling class and its political executive, whether Tory or Labour.

If political strategy to defeat the enemy of the Irish working class could be reduced to a matter of revenge, the IWG would have no hesitation in supporting the IRA attack upon Downing Street. But we believe that the defeat

of that enemy was not brought one single step forward by this attempt. Even if it had succeeded, we believe it amounted to a further step backward—yet one more in the IRA military campaign to destroy partition and unify Ireland. The Downing Street bomb, like that of Brighton in 1984, is exceptional only to the degree to which it reveals all the more clearly the political bankruptcy that lies behind the tactic and the movement that carried it out.

Our criticism does not follow from any condemnation of the violence of the act. As we have said the British (and Irish) ruling classes, through their legal, judicial and coercive apparatus have inflicted a degree of violence throughout the island far outweighing anything the IRA has been able to mount.

Their semi-racialist exultation over the mass slaughter of a routed and retreating Iraqi Army and the bombing of Iraqi cities reveals the bottomless well of hypocrisy from which they draw when they refer to the IRA as 'men of violence'. Against them and their war

machine we defend the IRA and Republicans and their right to defend themselves.

Our criticisms, therefore, are made from the standpoint of the effectiveness or otherwise of the act in advancing the struggle against British imperialism and for socialism in Ireland. In 1984 leading members of SF went on record to declare that if Brighton had succeeded, British imperialism, through a mixture of shock and demoralisation, would have sued for peace and withdrawal. So far no leading member of SF has been foolish enough to repeat this nonsense (although we are in no doubt that many in the movement continue to swallow it).

For it shouldn't need stating that any successor to either Thatcher in 1984 or Major today, probably a coalition of 'National Salvation', equipped with the most draconian emergency powers, would have wrapped itself in the mantle of 'saving democracy'.

With the aid of a similarly prepared southern bourgeoisie, a blanket of legal repression and physical terror would have enveloped the island. Internment,

prohibition, arrest would be the order of the day against anyone remotely connected with the anti-imperialist or socialist struggle.

With the active collaboration of the trade union leaders in the defence of 'democratic law and order', the anti-unionist and southern working class would be paralysed, while sections of protestant workers and youth would fuel the orange paramilitary murder gangs. Against all of this the IRA military campaign, divorced from even the recognition that mass action and struggle are necessary to break the log jam in the North, would be rendered even more impotent and desperate.

Only the perverted logic of a tradition which holds that the worse things become the greater is the chance for progress can continue to blind itself to these elementary political realities. Only a movement and tradition that remain wedded to the fantasy of 'pure' physical force from a few hundred guerrillas can go on believing that British Imperialism can be bombed into surrender.

The failure of the IRA exercise merely underlines further the sterility of the Republican strategy. For it immediately helped the enemy to consolidate at a time when over the issue of the Gulf war a potential existed for building a mass anti-war movement. But all too predictably, as happened in 1984 when the Miners Strike was at its height, it seems beyond the wit of anyone in the Republican movement to grasp the significance for their own struggle of a defeat for British Imperialism in the Gulf.

But on this occasion it was not just the Republican movement's narrow, traditional one-eyed nationalism that blinded them to the world around them. SF leaders took a public position of support for sanctions against Iraq—it is they lined up with their oppressor in an imperialist inspired coalition.

It suggests the extent to which Adams & Co are now prepared to go to be seen as 'responsible' politicians with whom, at some future date, British Imperialism and the Irish bourgeoisie can sit around the table to negotiate a settlement. ■

On February 2nd the No to War in the Gulf campaign held a national meeting of three representatives from each of about 13 action groups, predominantly SWM members or nominees. It adopted uncritically a lengthy set of 'perspectives' and organisational decisions tabled by the SWM leadership but never circulated or discussed among the hundreds in the action groups. It was a 'conference' by the back door in which there could be no challenge on any key decisions or on who was to lead the campaign. The lynchpin of the document was

"First, the No to the War in the Gulf Campaign is not a united front of revolutionary left groups. It is an open broad campaign based on the activists who join action groups. No political party can therefore claim its 'rights' to speakers. The public platforms of the campaign are determined by the commitment of various activists to building the campaign and the need to reach a wider audience."

After all the SWM's decisions had been duly ratified two delegates asked to know who were the campaign leaders who they represented. SWM listed 9 names. Four, they said, represented SWM, one from the Peoples Democracy (USFI), one from the Green Party (since resigned from the party), one from the Communist Party, and two 'co-opted' (by SWM in fact). What could better underline the fact that the whole campaign was initiated and led on the basis of claiming to be a *united front of left groups*.

What can explain such a bare-faced self-contradiction by SWM? What they were trying to achieve was two things. On one hand they needed to borrow 'legitimacy' for a self-appointed committee which they controlled by presenting it as representing a range of political groups. In reality, however, they were determined to *deny the right of political representation* to groups who might put up any serious challenge to their perspectives and their dominance of the campaign.

In the action groups the IWG consistently argued for an open democratic campaign in which the leadership would be fully accountable to the action groups, would predominantly be made up of delegates of action groups, but would also crucially include a delegate from each independ-

Not a United Front?

ent political, trade union and other organisation actually fighting for the aims of the campaign.

It was precisely to prevent any such political representation in the campaign that SWM laid down their 'not a united front' ultimatum. Any socialist remotely interested in winning mass support for a fighting campaign knows it is vital to unite, on a principled and democratic basis, all the small militant groups prepared to struggle if even the nucleus of an attractive campaign is to be built.

But it is not only a question of material resources. Any campaign, among a divided left, facing a working class dominated by the most poisonous misleaders, has to ensure that all distinct political tendencies which share the agreement for action, can represent their political positions in the debates in the campaign nationally. Sadly, the SWM tradition trains its members to put crude organisational considerations before any such principles of political democracy—even if that means ditching the struggle

itself, as they now setting out to do in the wake of the March 2nd ceasefire.

Where Now After the War?

The NTWG conference on March 3rd was a disaster. Had the war not ended in the preceding days SWM would have been set in even more firm control of the campaign on the basis of the same extremely limited perspective as before with the principal aim of controlling a growing periphery for their own recruitment while continuing limited protest actions against the war.

Everyone knew, however, that the end of the war would mean a sharp fall off in the attendance at action groups, and that a new kind of campaign was needed if any of the gains of past months were to be consolidated into an ongoing campaign against imperialist involvement in the Middle East.

SWM showed no interest in such a

IWG IN THE ANTI-WAR CAMPAIGN

THE IRISH WORKERS

Group argued for a consistently anti-imperialist attitude to the war in building the NTWG action groups.

In Galway Regional College, without the least assistance from the campaign nationally, we won the student body to boycott lectures and devote 4 hours to a mass

teach-in on the war which was addressed by IWG speakers and many others. Up to 700 students were present at any one time.

The forces rallied at the teach-in came together afterwards to resist an attempt by the right wing to disaffiliate the union from USI. After three mass

meetings, a referendum for disaffiliation was defeated.

And in the University of Ulster in Derry we won the student body also to hold a mass teach-in, but sadly not a boycott of lectures, which heard a wide range of anti-war speakers. ■



▲ Addressing the mass student teach-in at Galway Regional College

campaign. New perspectives were conjured up to commit the existing structure to building a propaganda block with no perspective of action, solely to raise 'awareness' on the issues. Determined to make sure that it would be the SWM's and no-one else's propaganda, McCann, Allen & Co. blocked the attempt, supported by all the other left groups, to make it an activists' conference rather than restricting votes to 'delegates'.

This position had been fought for consistently by the IWG for over a month, supported by Militant, PD, Anarchists and others as vital to draw in the maximum support and prevent the narrowing of the debate. In the leading branches of the campaign SWM engaged for four weeks in sectarian wrangling in defence of the restricted delegate basis for the conference (which they had imposed without consulting the action groups).

When it came to electing the delegates in the branches, leading SWM figures opposed the use of proportional representation (PR) which is the established method in the Irish labour movement wherever any shred of workers' democracy survives. Thus in the key branch of Dublin South SWM took all ten delegates to the conference, 8 members and two nominees! So much for defining the democracy of the campaign as based on the action groups and not on political organisations! The conference was thus stacked from the start.

The conference elected for the first time a national leadership—but by now it was for a dying campaign. SWM's camp voted to lay it down that political organisations supporting the campaign would have no representation as such in the national leadership! So much for the legitimacy of the previous ad-hoc committee which specifically claimed to be based on representatives of different political organisations!

During the vote, nominations were re-opened so that SWM's Eamonn McCann could arrogantly propose the leaders of Militant and the PD as candidates, a gesture repudiated by them but greeted with raucous laughter from SWM. McCann then had the

conference reject the use of PR in favour of a points system which favours broadly acceptable mediocrities rather than representing distinct minorities!

In the situation where the action groups were imminently facing decline, an ongoing campaign of solidarity could only be maintained by centrally involving the permanent organisations, specifically the left political groups. Jointly with the surviving action groups they would constitute the basis of a national solidarity committee engaging in action projects around the sharpest issues as they arose. The SWM's rejection of this idea of a united front of the left groups and action groups thus went beyond mere sectarianism and guaranteed the collapse of any continued campaign.

SWM has no interest, however, in such a perspective. They even cynically supported an absurd motion to continue using 'No to War in the Gulf' as part of the campaign name after the war rather than name it as appropriate for a campaign concerned with the new issues of war reparations, the Blockade, Palestinians and Kurdish national rights and Israeli expansionism. (They rejected IWG's proposal for 'Hands off the Middle East').

It was not the first time that SWM, having controlled a substantial campaign, was preparing to liquidate it after dredging it for recruits, rather than building on the existing forces for the needs of the ongoing struggle.

During the Reagan visit in 1984 McCann and Allen told the thousands at the final 'Reagan Reception' rally that 'this is only the beginning of the campaign', but in fact they never called another meeting! The subsequent years saw the attacks on Nicaragua, Grenada, Libya etc. stepped up while marginal solidarity action in Ireland was left in the control of religious groups.

The IWG, by contrast, continues to call for joint action on a principled basis to build a solidarity action network which can respond rapidly on the streets and in the work places to the likely new attacks by Imperialism and its Middle East puppets against the peoples of the region. ■

For Workers' Revolution in Iraq

CIVIL WAR is raging in Iraq. In all the principal cities there are reports of fighting and insurrection. There are three main sources of opposition to Saddam Hussein's murderous Ba'ath regime.

The uprisings are being met with ruthless repression by what remains of Saddam's security forces. They have bombed Kirkuk and fired missiles containing white phosphorus at rebels in southern Iraq. In Basra there are reports of indiscriminate tank attacks on civilian areas. In Baghdad the secret police are conducting round the clock house to house searches and summary executions.

Saddam's promised holy war against imperialism was a miserable failure. Now he has launched a "mother of battles" against his own population. At the same time he is desperately trying to buy off the leaders of the rebellion. He appeared on television to promise a new constitution and elections to parliament. So far this has not garnered him any support. But it has weakened the resolve of the army and local militias.

In Kurdistan, where the army was not destroyed by fighting in the war, there are reports of its collapse in the face of the offensive by the peshmerga. The local militia has gone over en masse to the Kurdish uprising.

The western media's combat-suited reporters have not dared venture near these scenes of new carnage. They report it from afar as if it were simply chaos, as if Apocalypse Now had been brought to the streets of Iraq's modern cities.

But the revolt underway is not an inexplicable collapse of civil society. It is an upsurge of struggle by hundreds of thousands of ordinary working people who have suddenly been denied the means to survive by capitalism and imperialism.

There is a revolutionary situation in Iraq. Though it has been created by the imperialist victory, the imperialist victors fear its consequences more than they ever feared Saddam's army. As Time magazine explained:

More than once President Bush has publicly exhorted the Iraqis to topple their leader. Yet what the allies had in mind was a palace coup, a change of regime 'from the centre of Baghdad'... not a free for all in the provinces that might rip the country asunder.

The reason Bush wanted a palace coup against Saddam is clear. The allied armies murdered an estimated 200,000 Iraqis in order to impose stability in the Gulf. They flattened one of the most advanced economies in the third world in order to ensure that the imperialist balance of power was restored in this oil producing region.

The breakup of Iraq will not only leave a vacuum and upset this new balance. Its national and religious character has the potential to ignite anti-imperialist revolts in every surrounding country. This prospect is now terrifying the imperialist "victors".

Yet US imperialism is paralysed in the face of the revolts. It is, at the moment, unwilling to intervene directly to restore civil order. It did its bit to aid Saddam by letting Republican Guard units pass under the gun barrels of imperialist tanks so that they could crush the revolt in Basra. The allied offensive stopped at Nasiriyah when it could have taken Baghdad because Bush, conscious of the toll taken by years of occupying Vietnam, did not want responsibility for civilian government. Now they have "kicked Vietnam" only to create what may prove to be another Lebanon.

The Shi'ite movement in the south is headed by pro-Iranian Islamic fundamentalist forces. The leader, Mohammed Bakr Hakim, is based in Tehran and wants to extend Shia Islamic rule into southern Iraq.

Shia Muslims make up 55% of the Iraqi population, but are second class

citizens under Ba'ath rule. This guarantees the main positions of power to the bourgeoisie from the Sunni minority, who make up less than 20% of the population. The Shi'ites had remained loyal to Saddam throughout the long war with Iran, but at the end of that war they still faced poverty and repression and became increasingly resentful of Ba'ath rule. The war with imperialism caused that resentment to explode into revolt.

IRAN'S DESIGNS

At present, reports suggest that Saddam's forces have unleashed a "reign of terror" against the southern uprising. Its fate rests more and more with the Iranian regime. Throughout the Gulf crisis Saddam sought to bring Iran into an alliance against the imperialists. The Iranian ruling class is split. There is a minority hard-line Khomeini-ite faction which, while stopping short of outright support for Iraq, wanted to maintain Iran's hostility to the Great Satan and its coalition.

These would give Iran a formidable airforce if the USSR agrees to supply them with spare parts and training (up to now the Iranian airforce has had to rely on US and French technology inherited from the Shah).

There are reports that the Iranian pasdaran, the so called "Revolutionary Guard", has participated in the fighting in southern Iraq. In turn the USA has warned Rafsanjani to stay out. The Iranian ruling class has to weigh its new-found acceptance into "civilised" diplomatic circles against the chance to defy imperialism and gain a major strategic hold on the Gulf region.

A southern Iraqi state allied to Iran would control 60% of Iraq's oil production (about the same volume as pre-war Kuwait).

On the other hand Iran itself has gained recognition and trade agreements with Turkey, Uganda and

it as one of the fruits of victory: here was the coalition replicated at the level of the Iraqi opposition, the basis for a provisional government of a unified Iraq. But it will remain a paper coalition for as long as the USA refuses to intervene directly in the civil war.

Only US military and political power held the anti-Iraq coalition together and only the same could put such a varied coalition government in power in Baghdad, since it would have to either smash or incorporate the anti-Saddam forces that America is hoping will emerge in the military.

As we write there are some signs of a change in US policy within the 15% of Iraq it currently occupies. It is being forced to feed the population and to accept deserters instead of its former brutal policy of sending them back to face starvation and the Republican Guard.

But the USA may yet be forced to make a strategic change and intervene

ing. The millions of Iraqi workers are a formidable threat to imperialism's desired peace in the region for the simple reason that they were made to pay for the war and are now being forced to pay for the peace.

Ninety per cent of the Iraqi working class stands idle, its factories smashed. It has not been paid for over a month. Having been herded into the trenches the Iraqi conscripts are returning to find their families literally starving, drinking foul water, living in shattered homes, and under the constant threat of repression from the desperate Ba'ath regime.

While we were prepared to defend Iraq against imperialism, revolutionary Marxists never supported Saddam, never ceased to be in favour of his progressive overthrow. The Stalinists and the Labour left now say we were wrong to support the military victory of Iraq, claiming that the new revolutionary potential results from Iraq's defeat. They ignore the historic scale of the defeat that has been inflicted on the masses of the whole Middle East as a result of imperialism's triumph, not least the Palestinians. They overlook the terrible price the Iraqi masses have had to pay for the failure to defeat imperialism. Moreover imperialism will never tolerate revolution in Iraq. Its troops are there ready, after their victory over Saddam, to quell any revolt which threatens the new balance of power, let alone the capitalist system in its entirety.

Now workers must enter the struggle to overthrow Saddam. There is not and never was anything "socialist" about the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party.

WORKING CLASS INDEPENDENCE

But workers' organisations which arise in the new conditions must keep politically separate from the present leadership of the rebellions. Any subordination of the workers' organisations to these leaders will mean disaster for the Iraqi masses. Once in power those leaders will be faced with the task of rebuilding Iraq. They can only do so with imperialist money and on imperialism's terms. Those terms will exact a heavy toll on the Iraqi working class in the shape of austerity, more starvation and unemployment, more repression.

To prevent this the workers must take charge of rebuilding Iraq. The workers must seize control of every remaining factory and utility and organise the reconstruction of the economy under workers' control. Where will the money come from? It will have to come from the seizure of all imperialist holdings in Iraq and from the wealth of the bourgeoisies in the surrounding countries.

Thus the Iraqi revolution will have to place on its immediate agenda not an accommodation with the rulers Syria, Iran and Turkey but their revolutionary overthrow. And it can best succeed in this by appealing to its class brothers and sisters in these countries who themselves suffer under dictatorships and face grinding poverty.

If imperialism intervenes militarily in the civil war workers must oppose it. They have no interest in being "liberated" at the point of US guns—guns which have refused to fire against Saddam's repressive apparatus and will be turned against anyone resisting a reactionary imperialist settlement.

Against Saddam's attempt to counter the revolution with the promised elections the workers must reply by demanding the convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly. He is



Ranged against this faction was President Rafsanjani and his supporters who played a clever diplomatic game to advance Iran's regional interests whilst playing imperialism and Iraq off against each other.

Without firing a shot Rafsanjani obtained the return of the territories and soldiers captured by Iraq between 1980 and 1988, the elimination of immigration quotas to Saudi Arabia (crucial in once again allowing Iranian participation in the pilgrimage to Mecca), reintegration into the diplomatic orbit of both imperialism and the USSR, the unravelling of the Arab diplomatic coalition against Iran and the active sympathies of Iraq's southern population.

He also gained for Iran 147 of Iraq's Soviet made top-level military aircraft, which he now refuses to return to Iraq.

Zambia since its re-acceptance into the western fold. Factional struggle within the Iranian bourgeoisie will decide whether or not it is prepared to sacrifice the movement in order to buy further accommodation with imperialism, and at present the pro-imperialist wing under Rafsanjani is in command.

If it can gain peacefully more than it could gain by antagonising the USA it will be prepared to sacrifice its supporters in Iraq.

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Beirut conference of 11-13 March, was heralded as the start of a consensus between the Kurdish leaders, the Shi'ite militants and US/Saudi-backed pro-imperialist Iraqi oppositionists. The western media trumpeted

directly into the civil war. It fears like the plague an extension of Iranian power and could not tolerate the break-up of Iraq. But the power it is relying on, the Iraqi military, seems vulnerable to forces no military or diplomatic analyst can predict: the desire of ordinary workers and peasants to stop killing their own people and join with them to rebuild their shattered country.

What should the Iraqi workers and poor peasants do in this massive crisis?

IRAQ'S FUTURE

Of the total Iraqi population 73% live in towns or cities. Iraq is one of the most industrialised Arab countries and has a large working class based in oil, chemicals, textiles and food process-

UPRISING OF THE KURDS

The Kurdish uprising is the latest in a long line of revolts within Iraq. The 22 million Kurds in the Middle East are the biggest nation in the world without a state. Over four million Kurds live in Iraq. The rest are divided between Turkey, Syria, Iran and the USSR. In every one of these countries they suffer discrimination and repression. However, throughout the whole history of the Kurdish national struggle they have been used as pawns by their oppressors against each other.

In 1975 an armed Kurdish uprising was crushed after Iran and the USA withdrew support because Saddam reached agreement with the Shah over the border dispute in the south with the Algiers Accord.

The Iranian Kurds played a major part in liberating Iran from the Shah, but fell as the first victims of the Islamic counter-revolution. As the Iran-Iraq war drew to a close a Kurdish uprising in Iraq was crushed when Saddam used poison gas. Many Kurdish villages were depopulated and their occupants herded into concentration camps. At the end of the recent war the peshmer-

gas launched a new offensive. The camp dwellers joined them, overpowering their guards and seizing the weapons, including tanks and artillery, of the retreating soldiers. The seizures of Kirkuk, and potentially Mosul—both of which are in an area where Kurds mix with Iraq's Arab population—represent the greatest military victories ever in the Kurdish liberation struggle. But the Kurdish uprising faces danger from two sources: its bourgeois nationalist leadership and the designs of the Ozal government in Turkey.

The leading forces within the uprising are Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). The PUK has traditionally been within the orbit of Iran and Syria. The KDP has a history of seeking accommodation with the Ba'ath regime with the goal of regional autonomy inside a unified Iraq. This is the stated aim of the uprising today. Barzani issued a call to all the factions involved in the Joint Action Committee, set up in December to co-ordinate the Iraqi opposition, to form a provisional govern-

ment of the whole of Iraq based in Kurdistan.

At the same time Turkey, whose regime most brutally repressed the Kurds, has made a something of a U-turn on the Kurdish question. Turkish premier Ozal announced a much publicised decree legalising the Kurdish language, for conversation though not for official purposes, for the first time in Turkey's modern history. On 11 March he broke with all precedents and met representatives of the PUK and KDP in Ankara. Ozal's new found cosmetic concern for the Kurds stems from a position of weakness, not of strength. He is faced with the prospect of a Syrian and Iranian backed Kurdish government on his borders. Once news of the rising spread into Turkish Kurdistan it prompted immediate mass demonstrations in some towns which the Turkish army crushed with its habitual brutality, killing six Kurds on the streets.

Clearly the Turkish regime is no friend of the Kurds. Even the language law has been stalled in parliament and the Ozal regime, a Presidential dictatorship installed after years of military rule, has been attacked by the far right and the generals for its new softness on the Kurds.

Continued on page 5

certain to restrict the elections and use what is left of the Ba'ath apparatus to intimidate voters. A sovereign constituent assembly, elected by all over the age of 16, could only advance the revolution if it was convened by the workers' organisations themselves and defended by a workers' militia.

This, together with every other aspect of the crisis and civil war gripping Iraq, faces the working class with the immediate task of building democratically elected cross workplace and city wide councils of action and an independent workers' militia. Such organisations will be capable of making a limited alliance with the Kurds and the southern insurgents but will also protect the distinct class interests of the workers and poor peasants. They can impose working class order in the cities against arbitrary looting and vendettas against continued repression and against real counter revolutionaries. They can defend the regime of workers' control and ensure a fair distribution of food and fuel, crushing those who try to exploit the misery of the masses in search of profit.

The struggles of such councils and such a militia will not be confined to routine administration. Iraq is being torn apart by civil war. The question of who is to rule the country is directly posed and a revolutionary party can and must be forged in the heat of the current struggle that can answer this question. Instead of a provisional government of US allies the workers must fight for a workers' and peasants' government based on the action councils and the workers' militia.

Immediately the Iraqi working class should fight for:

- the release of all political prisoners
- full political and social rights for women
- complete separation of religion from the state
- self-determination, up to and including secession, for the Kurds and all other oppressed nationalities of Iraq. Launch the fight for a unified, socialist Kurdish republic in every part of Kurdistan
- cancel the \$30 billion debt to imperialism. No reparations to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia
- nationalisation without compensation of all major industries
- workers' control of every workplace
- an immediate programme of reconstruction under a plan drawn up by the workers and poor peasants themselves

Spread the revolt throughout the Middle East. No peace with imperialism and its puppets.

Forward to the socialist federation of the Middle East! ■

GDR Workers on the March

The anniversary of the first free elections in what used to be east Germany was marked by demonstrations across the south of the country. This year though, the demonstrators cheered on the speeches which denounced Helmut Kohl. Peter Main looks at the changes taking place in Germany and the tasks of Trotskyists as hard times approach. Below we print the text of a leaflet distributed by supporters of Arbeitermacht and the Communist Platform of the PDS.

DEMONSTRATION of 100,000 on a Monday night in Leipzig is a powerful symbol in the United Germany. It was in Leipzig that small scale protests began. These were transformed into the mass movement that toppled the Stalinist regime. That the streets now ring to the demand for Kohl's resignation is a measure of how much has changed since unification.

Behind the demonstrations lies the growing realisation that an economic catastrophe is about to overwhelm the "new states". Immediately after the currency union in July, strikes erupted across the GDR. Workers demanded wage increases to cope with Western prices. Western trade unions entered the fray to recruit new members and to protect their Western membership from a wage-cutting flood of cheap labour. Typically, they negotiated a breathing space; wage deals and job security packages for between six months and a year.

The government's strategy was to rationalise the GDR economy under the control of the Treuehand, a state trust which was given control of all nationalised industry.

This strategy has failed. Buying off unrest has cost the equivalent of DM35,000 million and forced higher interest rates and taxes.

Meanwhile the sheer scale of trying to reorganise an entire planned economy in accordance with the norms of capitalism, added to the complications thrown up by promises to return state property to its original owners, has defeated the Treuehand's management.

Their plan now is simply to sell off all property at knockdown prices and allow the new owners to "rationalise" it as they see fit. Now the deals that bought the breathing space are running out. Workers' fears are stirred by the forecasts of unemployment reaching three or even four million. Already 30% of the workforce is either unemployed or on short time. On top of the mounting fears about unemployment came last week's announcement that rents in the "new states" will rise by 360% in August. This has begun to create increasing pressure for action.

The demos themselves were big but not especially militant. In Leipzig, 100,000 responded to a call from the West German engineering union, IG Metall, and the Citizens' Movement, which was formed during the first phase of the revolution against the Stalinists in the Autumn of 1989.

In Berlin, still an important region of

PDS influence, the discontent, and the realisation that a new political direction is needed, has penetrated into the ranks of the PDS itself. Supporters of the LRCI, organised around the newspaper Arbeitermacht, are working within the Communist Platform group inside the party. Since the last party conference in January they have seen the support for their arguments grow rapidly.

The developing German crisis is unique in history, the result of the first attempt to restore capitalism in what was a degenerate workers' state. The chief feature of the former GDR was the state control of the economy after the expropriation of the capitalist owners. Until the final collapse of the old regime, the strategic task of the working class was to seize control of the economy and the planning mechanisms from the bureaucrats. Today's objective has to recognise that the working class lost the opportunity to install its own regime and its own control of the economy. Today we have to fight to get control of the Treuehand, to stop it breaking up the workforces, to stop it privatising the assets, to stop it creating the imperialist world's biggest reserve army of unemployed workers.

The starting point for this is the current wave of protests. The way forward lies through the occupation of threatened plants and their use as organising centres of resistance to all the attacks on living standards.

Without a doubt this will bring the working class up against the full might of the state. Speaking to BBC Radio, after the Berlin Demo on 23 March, the Mayor of Berlin said he was expecting "a lot more than just demonstrations" in what might become a very hot summer.

The working class must create the alternative to the old state. Its factory committees, its democratic trade unions, its workers' councils, its control commission and its defence organisations are not only necessary here and now to stop the destruction of the economy, they are also the embryos of the future healthy workers' state.

That is the strategy to which the LRCI is winning recruits both inside and outside the PDS. ■

This leaflet was distributed by Arbeitermacht and Communist Platform members in the PDS and reproduced by several PDS branches instead of the official Party leaflets for the Berlin demonstration on 23 March. On 22 March, Neues Deutschland, the PDS newspaper, condemned the leaflet because "it might spoil friendly relations with the trade unions". At the demo the official slogans of the PDS were More Money! and As Few Redundancies As Possible! No doubt this explains the warm reception given to the Arbeitermacht/KPF leaflet!



GET HOLD OF THE TREUEHAND!

"Nobody will be worse off than before!" and "There will be no tax rises!"—who doesn't remember the CDU's election promises of last year?

Lies have short legs, so the proverb says. None have shorter legs than the taxation lie served up by "Unity Kohl" and his deputy, de Maziere. Massive tax rises for all workers, tax cuts (abolition of property and commercial capital taxes) for the rich and investment gifts for big companies. They would have us believe that the "social market" was a miracle worker that would bring us out of stagnation and economic collapse. For that every second job is to disappear, whole industrial regions are to be turned into industrial graveyards, a merciless policy of demolition destroys the factories. Rents leap to astronomical heights, whole cities and states are already bankrupt, and the health service and social services are to be liquidated.

It was all lies and deception, like everything else the Bonn government promised. The market economy means the capitalist economy and there profit rules, not the needs of working people (who are of interest to the bosses only if they represent a profitable market).

The Treuehand was set up to "renovate" the clapped out GDR economy and to make it "competitive". Now we can see what that means, the reckless destruction and throttling of all GDR industries. The Treuehand is not working in the interests of the people of the "new states". It is working solely in the interests of the West German employers, and they want three things from it: a viable market for their goods! no competitors in their own sectors! the ruination of the existing plants!

What they are looking for is to pick up those plants for next to nothing as soon as the property question can be sorted out, so they can then move production over to the low-wage regions of the East.

That is what the Treuehand is doing—that is what we have to fight!

The economic and taxation policies of the government affect everyone. We must give a massive and determined answer to this general attack

on our living and working conditions. Tens of thousands have joined the demonstrations in the last couple of weeks; tens of thousands have walked out in protest strikes. In some areas, factories have been occupied. But protest demos and token strikes alone will not be enough to stop Kohl.

Parliamentary protests and resolutions from the SPD and PDS or harsh words from the union leaders will be just as ineffective. These struggles can, and must, become the starting points for broadening the resistance and organising to make it effective. From protests to real resistance is a big step! It will only be successful if we take control of the fight into our own hands!

The employers and their government will press on with their plans for as long as we let them!

The Treuehand must be taken under the control of the workers!

● Get control of the Treuehand! We must open all the books and accounts, inspect all the deals and make them public—we can't leave it to the managers of the Treuehand!

● To get this we need a control commission in every plant with the right of veto on all plans, elected by mass meetings of all employees!

"We must scrimp and save every penny" the government tells us—but on the very same day Kohl can shell out DM 15,000 million to the US to help pay for genocide in the Gulf. In total some DM 60,000 million are to go up in smoke in the Gulf war. They have money enough for that, in the last couple of years the bosses have had their highest profits ever, in part thanks to the Anschluss with the GDR. Take the money from those who've got it! Let the bosses pay for re-unification!

The GDR economy had a lot wrong with it. First and foremost that the SED (Stalinist party) bureaucrats decided on production, not the workers. But it was "state socialism" that made possible secure jobs, low rents and that our pensioners didn't go below the breadline.

Did we march on the streets in Autumn 89 so that we could sleep out on them today?

Mass meetings in every plant to decide on the next steps!

Occupy all plants threatened with closure! ■

Sigurimi terror or the squalor and the poverty of the capitalist market. What is needed is the organisation of the workers, youth, peasants etc to resist police and army terror. Linked to this must be the building of democratic workers' and peasant councils to call for and co-ordinate general strike action across Albania. Fraternisation with the soldiers must be a key part of the goal of a mass armed uprising in the political revolution to destroy the coercive apparatus of the Albanian Stalinist state, while replacing it with real democratic planning and workers power! ■

CPI(ML) Flat Earthers in a Top Spin

The Communist Party of Ireland ('Marxist-Leninist') have for a long time hailed Albania as the only real socialist society in the world today. These hardy annuals of Stalinism recently outlined their position in a pamphlet *"Freedom and Other Articles"*. Its author Hardial Bains defends Albania against claims by the United Nations that there is no freedom in Albania. He enthuses on what has been achieved in the face of difficulties and in particular he praises "the measures to deepen and broaden the socialist democracy". The Albanian people, he says, "who by shedding their own blood, through hard work and great deprivation charted their own course, will not lose their independence..."

While it is certainly true that Albanians

shed their blood against Nazi terror and their own exploiting rulers in 1944, and that they have worked hard and suffered deprivation ever since under Stalinism, Bains merely parrots Hoxha's lies about freedom and socialism in Albania. Why have hundreds of thousands come out on the streets demanding democracy, why are tens of thousands desperately anxious to escape from Albania, risking life and limb in the process? Why are workers on strike in this socialist paradise. The CPML is silent.

The CPML believes Albania is truly socialist and free because it operates a centrally planned economy and, most importantly, does not borrow capital from the West. The possibility that neither the economy or the "plan" was ever under the direct control of the working class never occurs to them.

Events have finally blown the smokescreen of self-delusion and lies from around the apologetics of the CPML. There is little hope that Stalinist fanatics like Bains will ever see sense but one hopes that some of those in the CPML's front organisations, such as the Irish Student Movement, will at last begin to see fact from fiction.

The last redoubt of European Stalinism is tumbling. The collapse of Stalinism in other East European states last year provided the spark that lit the powder keg of unrest in Albania.

Albania was already wracked with the hardship associated with a stagnating economy. Growth was at its lowest in 15 years. Agricultural production was not meeting demands, resulting in chronic food shortages. People were starving in towns and villages.

Gaining confidence from the revolutions elsewhere, Albanian workers and students rose up in revolt against a Stalinist regime that spelt poverty, starvation and repression. Democracy, food and higher wages became the demands.

Before Christmas, city after city erupted in mass demonstrations. The crackdown was swift. Alia Ramiz, head of the Stalinist state apparatus, sent tanks and troops into the cities. The Sigurimi, Albania's Securitate, shot and killed demonstrators. Workers were arrested and jailed.

But the protests gained momentum. In February, 10,000 students boycotted classes and some later went on hunger strike in Tirana to have the name of Hoxha—founder of Stalinism in Albania and now hated symbol—struck from the university's title. In Tirana also, a 30 foot bronze statue of Hoxha was toppled as hundreds of thou-

sands of protesters demonstrated their hatred.

Police retaliation was again brutal. More demonstrators were killed with hundreds arrested and given punitive jail sentences.

Then began the mass exodus out of Albania as thousands sought to escape a desperate economic situation and police repression.

What we are witnessing is the disintegration of yet another Stalinist regime. Since 1944 when Enver Hoxha led his guerrillas to victory against the Nazis and the collaborating Albanian ruling class the country has been a hideous monument to Stalinist repression and backwardness. The Stalinist programme of "socialism in one country" cut it off from the outside world in the fantasy that socialism could be developed on a scale higher than the most developed capitalist economies. Like other East European states created bureaucratically from above, capitalism was indeed overthrown but not in any way heralding emancipation for the working class. A bureaucratic caste of parasites, headed by Hoxha, fed off the suffering of the workers and peasants.

Desperate to avoid the fate of fellow dictator Ceausescu, Alia Ramiz, Hoxha's successor introduced a number of reforms. Elections were promised for the end of March, a new opposition party was founded, striking workers were awarded higher pay

and restrictions on travel and religion were eased. But these were not enough to quell the masses' unrest. Ramiz's brutal repression of workers and students and his hard line defence of Hoxha, whom he has made a symbol of his election campaign, shows clearly the Stalinist apparatus remains unbroken.

The workers' and students' hatred for Hoxha's legacy is justified. Albania was the

showcase for economic misery and political repression. No wonder the masses have illusions that anything, even capitalism, would be better than the misery of monolithic dictatorship. It discredits the very idea of socialism in the eyes of millions.

But the experience of the workers in the rest of the Stalinist bloc shows that such illusions are no way forward against either



NEW ZEALAND WORKERS IN STRUGGLE

After more than a year of intensive discussion and debate, the Communist Left of New Zealand recently made the decision to become a sympathising section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

So opens the article in the March issue of *Red Letter* (No 71) announcing the welcome fact that the LRCI now has a presence in Australasia. The comrades have also taken the decision—to mark this new stage in their development—to change their name to Workers Power (NZ).

The full text of the declaration of fraternal relations between the LRCI and WP(NZ) will be published in the forthcoming issue (No 6) of *Trotskyist International*. This declaration expresses the fruits of written and face to face discussions on such questions as the socio-economic nature of New Zealand, the struggle of the Maori people, the history of the Fourth International and the political economy of world capitalist crisis. We are also able to test out this agreement in practice through joint work inside New Zealand.

This new step for WP(NZ) could hardly come at a more important time for the left of the labour movement in New Zealand. From 1984 until the general election in October last year, the Thatcherite Labour Party government rode roughshod over the working class. The scale and tempo of privatisation of state assets surpassed that of the Tories in Britain. Presiding over a near permanent state of economic recession in New Zealand since the end of 1985, the Labour government acted in concert with the trade union bureaucracy to ensure that working class resistance to a major rise in unemployment was muted. Not surprisingly six years of drastic attacks by Labour left the working class disgusted and confused. Mass abstentions and defections at the last October elections ensured the return to office of the openly conservative National Party.

The new administration lost little time in attacking the two areas that the last government held back on: compulsory trade unionism and the level of state welfare benefits. The Labour government, needing the assistance of the trade union officials to get through its attacks, agreed to underwrite the closed shop since this underpinned many of the privileges of the bureaucrats. The National Party felt no such compunction.

The government has tabled a new Employments Contract Bill (ECB) which, in a calculated insult, is due to become law on May Day. This bill replaces the Labour Relations Act. Under the ECB unions are not recognised as such and compulsory unionism is abolished. The ECB clearly shifts the whole of industrial relations in favour of the bosses and is an attack on effective trade unionism.

And the other main plank of National Party's attack shows how important effective trade unionism is going to be in the months ahead. On 1 April a new Finance Bill is due to

become law. This cuts \$1NZ billion off welfare benefits for hundreds of thousands of claimants, including the abolition of the universal child benefit.

As *Red Letter* explains the two Bills are related in the minds of the government:

"The cuts in benefits and the social wage ... will force the 300,000 unemployed to compete with low paid workers for jobs on the bosses terms or face a 26 week stand down. At the same time the ECB will pressure workers to accept individual contracts on the bosses' terms."

The Labour movement has moved hesitantly into action. Most major unions have stopped work to hold meetings on the ECB or in pursuit of new contracts before 1 May. Such renegotiation is the favoured approach of the bureaucracy as it would prevent them coming into head on collision with the government. The dockers took a decision to strike for two weeks in March, but settled on a new contract before the action was due to start. In return for recognition the union has agreed to abandon national agreements and settle port by port. We have seen the consequences of this in Britain!

In a similar process the hotel workers have agreed to the end of overtime rates for weekend working, and to increased casualisation.

The bureaucracy has planned a Week of Action for 2 to 9 April which may include strike protests on 4 April by teachers, and possibly other workers, plus a march of claimants. In the best move so far the seafarers are threatening an indefinite strike from 3 April.

WP(NZ) have been quick into action. Their leaflet, calling for a general strike to beat the ECB, has been distributed to many of the union meetings. They were instrumental in getting the University technicians union nationally to call action against the ECB. The stakes are high in this fight. The union leaders are only interested in mitigating the effect of the Bill; those with the unions' interests at heart should be fighting to smash it now.

As *Red Letter* says:

"Workers Power believe that the only way the Bill can be defeated is by launching an all-out indefinite strike. ... Different unions going on strike at different times will allow the employers to employ the salami tactic and take us on piecemeal... Militants must put forward motions calling on the CTU to organise an all-out indefinite stoppage, every meeting should decide on their claim and strike for it now regardless of the expiry date of their award. No groups should settle until all claims are agreed by the bosses."

Copies of *Red Letter* are available, price \$20 NZ for 12 months, from

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Box 6595
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Publishes theses and

resolutions of the League
for a Revolutionary
Communist International

CONTRACEPTION

Condoms: ACCESS FOR ALL!

The successful prosecution of the Irish Family Planning Association for supplying contraceptives to an illegal outlet came as a sharp smack in the mouth to anyone fool enough to believe Mary Robinson's election heralded a new dawn of sexual freedom in the republic.

The severity of the fine and the threat of imprisonment if it happened again signalled clearly that in spite of the 50 million condoms imported every year this moral police state will resist to the teeth any fundamental changes.

The response of the bourgeois politicians was an object lesson on the hand-and-glove relationship of Church and State in Ireland. Haughey, predictably alert to the "new constituency" which elected Robinson, baldly

declared himself in favour of a reduction to sixteen of the age which contraceptives should be legally available. Immediately the crawthumpers in his and other parties sounded the trumpets for the Catholic Church to move front stage.

The fire and brimstone damnation of Newman was entirely to be expected, but when Comiskey—"a prelate with a social conscience" began to lament the scourge of unemployment and emigration as more worthy of concern, the fat was in the fire.

Haughey got the message. Any change to sixteen would mean a full scale attack from the Church, a battle that Fianna Fail as the party rooted in rural society, knows only too well, it could not win.

Once again we have witnessed the

revolting and shameful spectacle of a collection of medieval celibates dictating the sexual mores and behaviour of the people. The silence of the trendy liberals and professionals has been as predictable as it has been deafening.

More importantly, the silence from the self-proclaimed champions of women's rights—the feminists—and the abortion information campaign, merely underline the hopeless cul-de-sac into which, down the years, these people have led one struggle after another.

Having had at one time all the possibilities of building a mass campaign that could have challenged the whole catalogue of anti-democratic legislation on matters of sexuality, they have watched it wither and die as their schemes become more and more patently bankrupt. Rather than act now around this issue, they await the judgement of Strasbourg on the issue of abortion information, a judgement that the Irish bourgeoisie will surely ignore.■

UNIONS

Smash An Post Plan

5 GOOD REASONS



TO FIGHT TO SAVE THE POST OFFICE

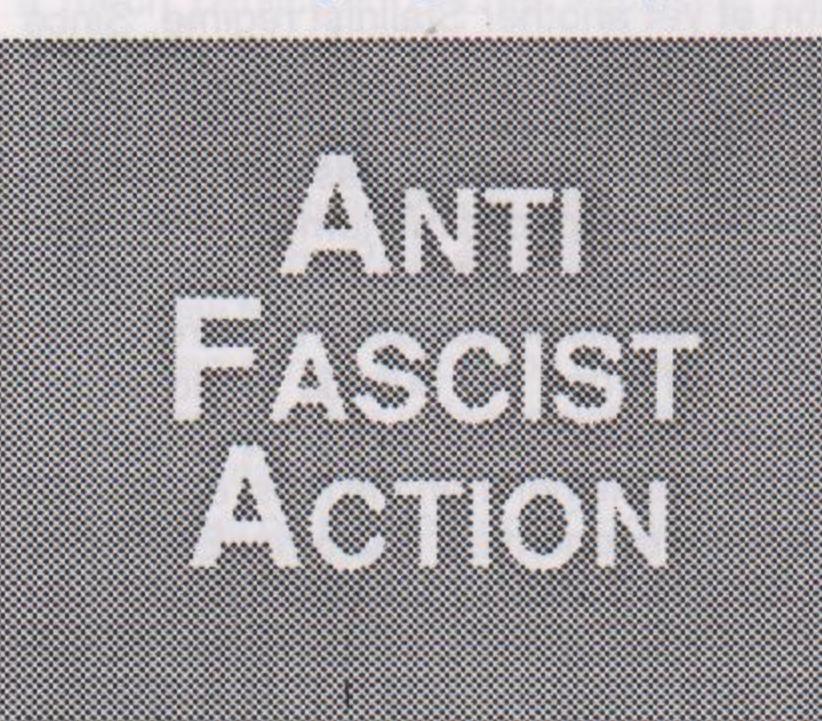
▲ Leaflet resisting the Plan distributed nationwide by postal workers

They seek merely to influence its shape.

No sooner had tentative agreement been reached on talks, when CPSU top nobs were slipping in for a 'cup of tea' with Jack Russell—Hynes' right hand man. Branch committee members were only informed of this by default.

Fighting Form

On a more positive note, the 7,000 members of the Communications Workers Union are in fighting form. They stand to



The Irish Workers Group joined in demonstration against Le Pen and his European Parliament cronies when he hosted a meeting in Dublin Castle by permission of the Haughey government.

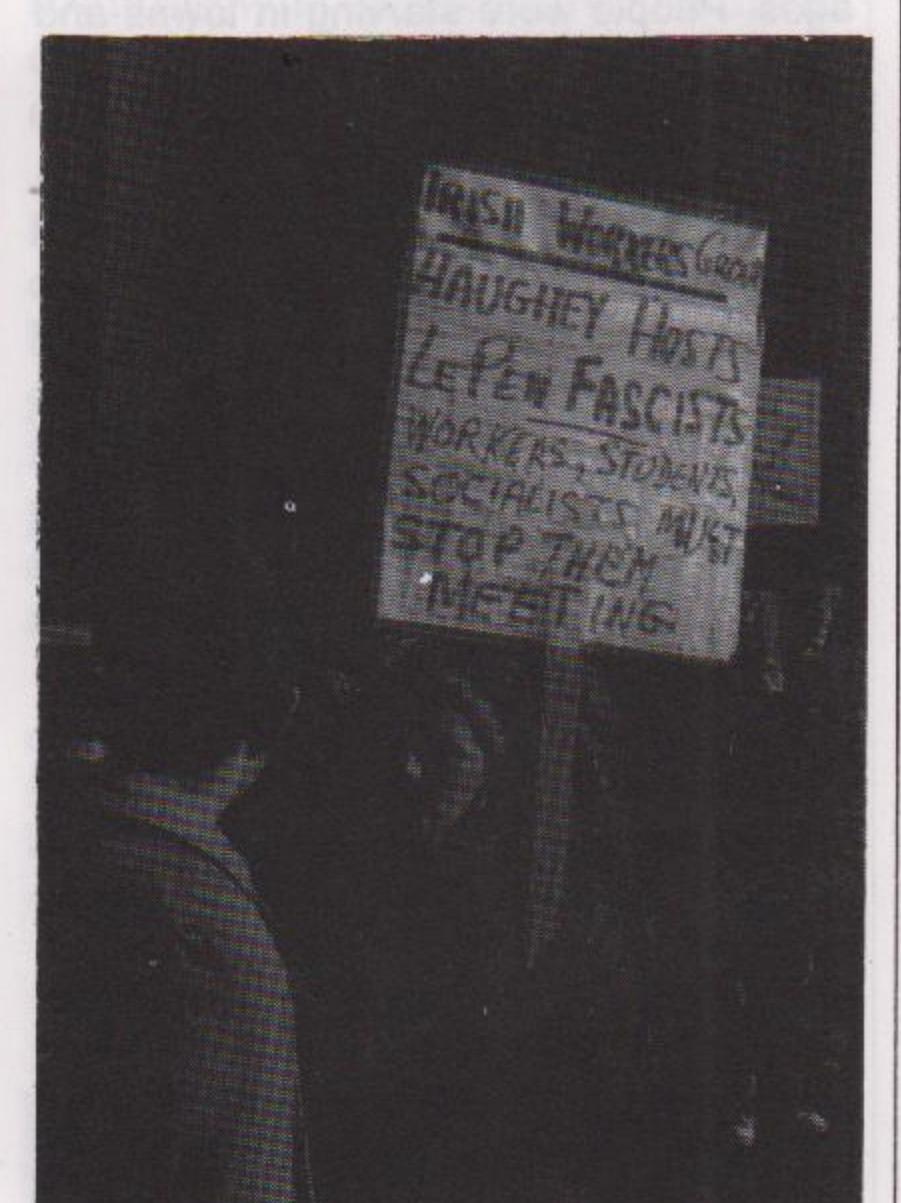
lose most from the deal, especially if overtime earnings are eliminated. They are not in the mood for pussyfooting, whatever the dallying of their General Secretary, David Beggs. Already they have orchestrated a nationwide drop of leaflets (the first ever) outlining their opposition to the Plan. 88% of them balloted in favour of industrial action to secure their deferred 6% arbitration award.

No Redundancies

On the Civil and Public Services Union branch committee in An Post, an IWG supporter secured outright opposition to negotiation on redundancies. However the lack of Head Office opposition to this move is due to the belief that they can sit back and do nothing when members are offered redundancy or early retirement.

Many dangers lie ahead. Not least of which is the possibility that ICTU will secure acceptance for the core Plan proposals on the basis of some concessions around the issue of pay claims. This would be disastrous. An Post workers need a vigorous campaign to break out of the circle of doom, defeat and demoralisation that the leadership is trying to foist on them.

They may have been the first into the firing line but they won't be the last. The other semi-states workers know this. That is why the best way to fight the An Post fit-up with is to co-ordinate resistance win conjunction with them. That means fighting to build a public sector alliance now.■



Spring Clean for the Starry Plough

THE CRISIS OF STALINISM and the collapse of the Stalinist states in Europe has for the moment discredited the idea of communism among millions of workers across the world. It has resulted in a new arrogance on the part of the bourgeoisie everywhere in pushing the idea that the capitalist system is the only viable way of organising things.

Buckling under this new offensive, the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties have turned sharply to the right in a gadarene rush to jettison any remaining commitment, however formal, to fighting capitalism. The Irish Labour Party is no exception.

Two years ago in Tralee Dick Spring crushed the opposition from anti-coalitionists in his party. Now as a new conference approaches he is determined to carry through his victory with the replacing of the old Labour Party constitution by a new one.

One might expect a party which says such a lot about democracy to decide this issue democratically. Spring is having none of this. Taking a leaf from the book of the SIPTU bureaucrats in imposing a new rule book without debate, Spring has succeeded in getting the Administrative Council to put the new constitution down as an item on the "final agenda". This means that referral back or amendments would be excluded.

The Old and the New Constitution

In Spring's new draft the aims and objectives of the Labour Party are relegated, along with the Labour Party Youth constitution and Standing Orders, to the position of appendices. This in itself speaks volumes about the cynicism of the Spring leadership concerning the principles and aims of the Labour Party.

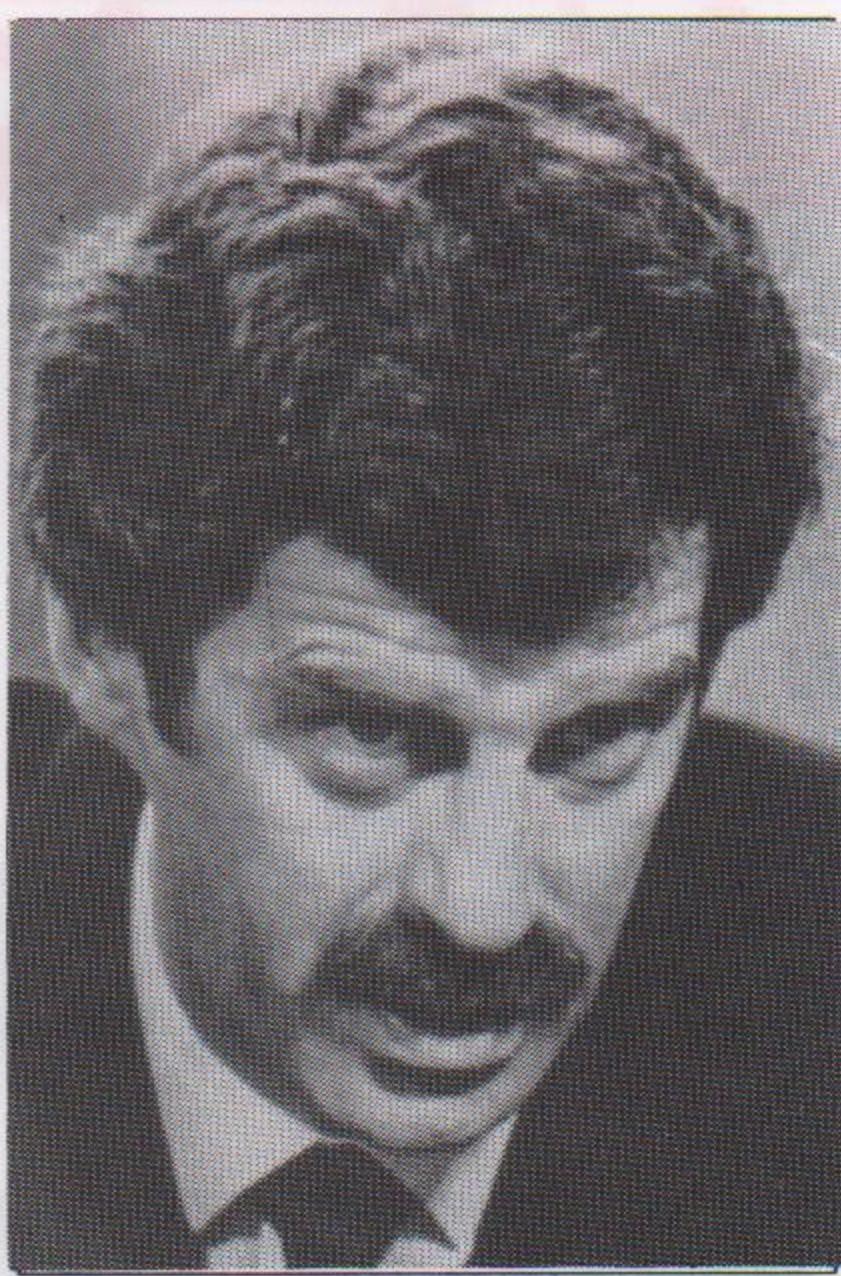
Longstanding political objectives of the Labour Party enshrined in the old constitution, such as the nationalization of the banks, the democratic control and ownership of industry and the creation of a 32-county workers republic, are to be scrapped. Even the statement that "The Labour Party is a distinctive independent political party representing the interests of the workers" is to be replaced by the following piece of gibberish: "The Labour Party came into being to close the gap between what ought to be and what is".

Goals hailing back to the Labour Party's founders, Connolly and Larkin, are to be replaced by the following:

"The wish of the Irish people is for an open and mixed economy providing individual choices and opportunities. We pledge ourselves to the development of that economy so that it is efficient, dynamic and capable of creating and sustaining wealth."

This is nothing but a thinly disguised apology for greater efficiency in the capitalist exploitation of workers. The new draft constitution goes on to substitute four new aims for the working class. These turn out to be no more than four bland principles of vaguely liberal politics—freedom, equality, community and democracy. These are to be the core value of the brave new Labour Party.

In one fell swoop Spring aims to jettison the few remaining gains of Irish workers' struggle that the Labour Party still embodies, in return for a mess of platitudes. Gone is the commitment to "break up ranch lands, to settle as many persons as possible on adequate holdings with facilities for stocking and working the land"—the only really radical concession to small farmers' needs.



Root and Branch Reforms

The AC is to be scrapped and replaced by a General Council which will be:

... responsible for the organisational and administrative affairs of the Party and shall direct and co-ordinate party activities.

Several erosions of democracy are implied here. Among the most important are the following:

- The AC members from the parliamentary party, the conference, Labour Youth, Womens National Council etc were elected by these bodies. In the General Council, they will be appointed.

- The 17 members elected to the AC by conference will be reduced to 15 appointees to the General Council.

- The AC power to "... borrow or receive money, with or without security, from such bank, company or person as its thinks fit" is to be siphoned off into the hands of a new body—the Executive Committee. The aim is to further remove such important powers from the scrutiny of members and conference. Will this be the first move in giving us the Labour Party's *Taca*?

- This new EC, defined as a standing committee of the General Council will be the bureaucratic rubber stamp for Spring and his cronies. It will, in effect, neutralize the General Council's accountability to Conference through its "power to make its own rules and standing orders".

The victory of Spring at Tralee meant an erosion of democratic rights. This is now crystallised in the draft constitution. The most important instances are clear:

- Annual conferences will henceforth take place biannually.

- Control by the AC subject to conference for the "... development and promulgation of party policy" is replaced by control by the parliamentary party "... subject to the ultimate control exercised by party conference and the determinations of the General Council".

- Previously the AC, in consultation with the Labour Party in the Oireachtas had the power to prepare and oversee local, national and European election programmes. This power is now placed in the hands of the EC.

- While the AC had power, subject to annual conference, to decide the procedure for the selection of all Labour Party election candidates, the EC now usurps this power.

- The new constitution gives both the EC and the General Council absolute rights over admittance to and expulsion from the Labour Party.

—The right to appeal cancellation of membership to national conference will be scrapped.

—Branches under the new constitution can be suspended by the EC, where previously only the AC had fulfilled this role. There is no appeal to national conference.

—The EC has been given the power to admit, refuse or cancel corporate membership—with appeal to national conference.

—Proportional representation procedures in co-options to the national organs of the Labour Party will be abolished.

—The draconian measures to prescribe Militant are retained.

—Women and youth will lose their ex-officio delegates at conference.

The National Question

The rank and file of the Labour Party and the affiliated unions sharply resented the undemocratic decision of the Dail T.D.'s to support the deletion of articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Constitution. Nevertheless Spring wants this position endorsed. The draft constitution gets rid of the following statement:

"The Labour Party affirms that the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and territorial seas and it accepts as part of its immediate programme the work of securing social justice and equal opportunities for all its citizens in accordance with the declaration of the democratic principles embodied in the Proclamation of Easter 1916."

For Ireland and for Labour, freedom and the unity of our country are indivisible. The unity of Ireland for which James Connolly died, and to which Labour will always aspire, is a unity of people, in equality, mutual acceptance and trust and not just of territory."

Spring & Co. are preparing for coalition—one that, if necessary, will repeal articles 2 and 3 as a bait to Paisley and Molyneaux.

Resist Spring

Labour Party members must reject Spring's take-it or leave-it constitution. His bureaucratic ruse of putting it into the final agenda must be defeated.

Branches, constituency councils, the Womens National Council, Labour Youth and the Trade Union Group, should use clause 4 of the standing orders of national conference to put down motions referring both constitutions back to the rank and file of Labour and the affiliated unions. Failing this, an emergency motion for referral should be tabled.

Those who genuinely believe that Labour must be an independent working class party committed to the goal of socialism and Connolly's Workers Republic must resolutely defend the retention of these aims in its constitution.

All democratic rights under attack must be defended as the prelude to a fight in the Labour Party branches and affiliated unions to extend them, and to turn the Labour Party out to workers' struggles.

The best trade unionists, youth, women and anti-imperialists in the Party will learn in struggle for such goals whether their party can become the champion of the exploited and oppressed or as the IWC firmly believe whether it needs to be replaced by a revolutionary workers' party of the kind fought for by Lenin and Trotsky.■

COMMUNISTS AND YOUTH

YOUNG PEOPLE are systematically oppressed in class society through the denial of specific social, economic, legal and political freedoms. These forms of social oppression are a fundamental feature of bourgeois society. They are rooted in the social structures of the family and the nation state and they are essential to capitalism.

The social structure which most fundamentally reproduces = the oppression of youth is the bourgeois family. It is not an eternal feature of human life, but rather a product of class society. The family instils into youth the rules they are expected to abide by in adult life as obedient workers.

The youth of the working class and the poor are subject to the most intense exploitation. Such youth are the backbone of the low waged industries. This in turn reinforces youths dependence on parents. Their poor quality of education and training is designed to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Dependence

Another consequence of this economic and legal dependence on the family is the repression of their sexuality. This is an essential starting point in class society for instilling conformity and obedience. Youth are not allowed to develop a rational understanding of their sexual feelings, even when those feelings conform to the heterosexual norm prescribed by bourgeois society.

Instead, youth are subjected to moral and religious taboos and their sexuality is distorted and denied genuine expression. Those youth who happen to be either gay or lesbian are not only repressed, they are also denounced, abused and criminalised. Their sexual orientation is considered "unnatural" in bourgeois society.

To liberate youth from these various forms of subordination requires the revolutionary transformation of society. This will ensure that the individual family household is no longer an institution for oppressive and unpaid domestic toil centred on the raising of children and care of the ill and aged. This would free youth to be independent of their parents, with as much or as little contact as they wish.

Differentials

Economic independence, unrestricted access to education and freedom from super-exploitation are the key demands for youth. For those in paid employment, equal pay for work of equal value must be achieved under workers control in order that gross pay differentials, which exist between youth and adult workers, can be overcome. Reduced hours, with no loss of pay, should be worked by youth when they first enter employment. They should also have the right to longer holidays.

Education and training for youth must be fought for by the whole class. Education should be free, with all expenses paid by the state. It should be comprehensive and available to all. It needs to be compulsory up to a certain age, agreed by the labour movement. Therefore we fight for the abolition of all tests and the savage points system which are designed to restrict entry into educational institutions. Students also need a living grant, set by committees of students and workers.

The workers movement should strive for integrated schooling. Furthermore schooling should be secular.

The bourgeois bias of the curriculum needs to be fought at every opportunity in favour of instruction in the history of the workers movement and humanity. We fight for free discussion of sexual, social and political questions in schools.

We fight to bring all educational facilities under the control of the working class and students. We fight for the autonomy of education from the capitalist state. School and college students should be free to form unions and political organisations. Worker and student control bodies must fight for the right to veto the appointment of reactionary teachers and the teaching of racist/fascist materials.

Students

Though students as a whole are not automatically a natural ally of the working class, nevertheless many can and must be won to the side of the revolutionary workers' movement. Mass student struggles show that they have a vital role to play, alongside the proletarian vanguard, in the struggle for socialism.

Full benefits must be available as soon as youth leave full time education, so that they are not dependent on the family. When youth are unemployed the labour movement must fight for genuine training and education for them.

Family

Within the family parents are responsible for implementing the oppression of their children. This is most obviously the case when disobedience is met with violence and abuse. Youth, therefore, need to fight for full legal and political rights within the family to help break the domination that parents exert over them. Where a family denies youth the right to pursue their chosen sexual and social activities, social centres need to be provided, under their own control, where all such facilities are freely available. Information and education about sex and safe sexual practices should be available there with free contraception and abortion referral services.

Youth must also be given full political and legal rights in the public sphere. If youth are mature enough to be drafted into the bosses army—to defend their system of exploitation—then they are mature enough to make responsible decisions in peace time. That means that the right to make legally binding decisions in financial and civil matters must be guaranteed at the same age.

Organised

The organised working class must draw youth into the unions on reduced dues, but with full membership rights. Youth must then organise sections within the unions to press for their own demands.

Youth generally lack the conservatism which has broken the spirit of older workers. They have not been worn down by years of reformist misleadership and betrayal. Therefore, a revolutionary youth movement must be built as a key organisation in the struggle for working class power.

Such a movement, armed with a revolutionary transitional programme, can draw youth from other classes, from the small farmers and the urban petit bourgeoisie, under the leadership of revolutionary communism. And only revolution communism can really answer the problems of youth.■

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After PESP Rebuild the Fight

The two to one majority vote by trade unionists in favour of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) was a major disappointment by activists on the left. Not that we take such figures at face value. The vote in most workplaces was wide open for a fiddle, and in several known cases anti-PESP members had to hunt down ballot papers.

Nevertheless, there was a real increase in the number of unions voting for the pact as compared to a much closer result last time round.

What Went Wrong?

The coming together last year of more than 300 shop stewards and activists around TUUAP in a fight to oppose the new deal seemed to augur serious resistance to another sellout.

But it is noticeable that while many shop stewards themselves were against the deal, they were unable to deliver a No vote in their workplaces. The gap in outlook and expectations between them and their members shows how national wage bargaining (conducted by the ICTU behind the backs of the rank and file since 1971) has worked to undermine participation and militancy at grass roots level.

Meanwhile attacks by right wing economists on the PESP added to the impression that the ICTU had secured a good deal. PESP was sold as a victory for the trade union movement at a time of ever-deepening recession. A special SIPTU glossy bulletin devoted its entire contents to marketing the deal.

Nevertheless the effort put into the anti-PESP struggle in Galway, especially in SIPTU, resulted in the vote there being carried a majority of only twenty. IWG members played a leading role in that campaign.

Asked about how a surge in inflation figures would affect basic wage increases under PESP, SIPTU supremo Bill Attley replied: "We are ensuring that inflation does not get out of line, a strong currency is our protection. The PESP will ensure that our currency remains at the top of the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the EMS and that will deliver the stable prices workers need."

And just to prove that the union bosses mean business Edmund Browne, co-president of SIPTU warned workers "The deal will last, we won't have unofficial strikes". That he and the SIPTU bosses mean what they say is shown in the breaking of the National Bus and Railworkers Union strike in Dublin under duress from Browne & Co.

Where persuasion failed to work, less subtle tactics were resorted to. The CPSU Executive was mandated

at its last conference to "oppose any new wage deal that restricts the right to strike". The Executive responded by recommending acceptance of the PESP the Friday before the terms of the deal were officially published! Activists within An Post branch who sought to use their branch newsletter to oppose the deal were told bluntly by their official that union funds would not be used to promote arguments against PESP. Despite the fact that the public sector had traditionally backed such deals, one quarter of the CPSU membership voted for rejection.

Among other sectors traditionally opposed to national wage bargaining, union bureaucrats managed to sweeten the pill by buying off key sectors, like the construction industry with extra increments.

What Alternatives?

In the end of the day the deal was struck because most workers saw no real alternative to it. "That's all we'll get anyway. Aren't we better off with £5 in our pockets than on a wing and a promise from union leaders" was how one disillusioned activist put it. If that's the case in unionised workforces—how much more despondent is the mood among the non-unionised and among those without a major say e.g. unemployed (neither of whom could vote).

TUUAP never addressed this vital issue. It doggedly persisted in limiting the campaign to the call for a No vote. It did so in the belief that the attempt to forge an alternative would have split its forces. This referred to the danger of alienating left bureaucrats, such as Brian Anderson of MSF who, as it turned out, didn't lift a finger against the deal.

TUUAP failed to offer any solution to the question on the tip of every worker's tongue—what's the alternative to letting the official union leaders bargain conduct national talks? The lack of even the beginnings of an alternative leadership and strategy on this issue caused even sympathetic workers to ignore advice to vote against.

Meanwhile the bureaucrats have steamed ahead in their collaboration with the bosses. "We've set the agenda during the recent talks and not the employers", claimed a jubilant Attley. His suggestion of a ten year strat-



▲ Christy Kirwan (centre), ICTU president, at home with Haughey and employers' leaders launching PESP in Dublin Castle.

egy was warmly received by Haughey.

Hardly was the ink dry on PESP, when it was used as a stick to beat the workers of An Post. Management introduced a rationalization package which linked the payment of basic wage increases promised under PESP to company performance. Given that An Post faces serious financial difficulties, this is effectively a wage freeze. The 'inability to pay' loopholes with which PESP is riddled provide cover for this action.

Yet the proposals to cut 1,500 jobs in An Post and even more in Telecom were first announced in the media months ago. They were contained in a document submitted for consideration by the "social partners" during PESP negotiations.

Persistent leaks over the intervening months were designed to weaken workers' resistance and to destroy their morale by inoculating them with large doses of apathy—hopefully resigning them to the "inevitable" in advance.

Buzz Word

Haughey's union lackeys have a new buzz word—"consensus". They are at pains to peddle the notion that workers' organisations have a role to play in managing capitalism on behalf of the Irish bosses. SIPTU official Jimmy Somers pleads for a "...more pro-active approach, and to have a say in the planning of the economy.... These can only be advanced by discussion and consensus at national level. Further these discussions give the movement a say in the planning of the economy". On the prospects of 1992 bringing job losses Somers (who earns approximately £49,000 per year) agrees that this is "inevitable".

Part of this "pro-active" approach involves giving the green light for the privatization of the semi-states. The fate of Irish Life and Irish Sugar has

already been sealed. The new nonsense approach was summed up by Attley. On the forthcoming privatisation of the commercial semi-state firms, the unions have a clear choice. They could, said Attley, say it was wrong and stick their heads in the sand. Or they could recognise the inevitable and seek to influence the shape of the privatisation process.

Unprofitable commercial state companies like An Post are being whipped into shape with the connivance of ICTU. Since 1984, when An Post went semi-state a strategy was pursued of giving fax and electronic communications to Telecom, despite the fact that core mails revenue was terminally in decline. Telecom received an investment injection of £1.6 billion (beefing it up for privatisation at some date in the future), while An Post was starved of essential funds—with the government renegeing on the initial promised investment of a mere £50m.

The targeting of An Post's workforce with the new Viability Plan will serve a double purpose. It tackles a financially weakened semi-state with a traditionally militant workforce. Apart from job losses, worsening of work practices—the introduction of temporary/part-time workers and the contracting out of work etc. are on the cards. If management succeed in An Post, the floodgates will be opened. The state is already putting pressure on Aer Lingus workers. O'Hanlon is looking for £10m cuts in the funding of local health boards. And flexibility is to be forced on teachers and workers in education.

Building a Fightback

The recall conference of TUUAP, planned for April 27, sharply poses the issue of how to fight back despite the bureaucracy's victory in carrying the PESP.

The union leaders have warned that the terms of the deal will be enforced to letter. We must hold them to this. That means fighting to ensure that every single worker gets the basic wage increases promised. The union leaderships have said that the 3% local bargaining element is as good as realised. Don't take their word for it. Officials must be put under pressure by workplace branches to ensure that the 3% is delivered without strings.

This means mobilising to defeat every use of the inability to pay clause. We must defy every part of the PESP which obstructs any side of our struggle, especially the no-strike clause, which is already being used with the Industrial Relations Act to bludgeon CIE workers back to work. For active solidarity with every worker breaking PESP's no-strike clause

Low Pay Scandal

In addition to this we must mobilise the rank and file to attack the scandal of low pay. The ICTU have been committed to fight for a statutory minimum wage by a whole set of Congress motions. We must build a mass fight from below now for this demand, forcing it on the ICTU and the national executives of the unions, while not holding back for them to act.

The PESP is a crying betrayal of the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed. And within days of its being signed, we saw a massive spurt in unemployment figures. We must build a rank and file movement that addresses the issue of mass unemployment by demanding a massive scheme of public works at union rates of pay. At the same time we must resist the new wave of redundancies in the pipeline by rallying round the demands:

Cut the hours, Not the jobs

The PESP offers no advance for women on either the front of equal pay or equal access. This is despite the fact that women's pay is still 67% of men's and women's access to apprenticeship is still less than 5%. We must mobilise women workers as a vital part of a rank and file movement to begin a serious fight on this front.

Finally the Industrial Relations Act, a fall-out of PESP's fore-runner, the PNR, faces workers with new draconian restrictions on union rights, especially the right to strike. As we go to print, it is being used against CIE strikers in Connolly station. A rank and file movement must fight to commit striking workers to defy the Act.

It must pledge itself to mass solidarity action, including sympathetic strikes, with every worker victimised under this Thatcherite law. In addition to this workers must be prepared to oppose tooth and nail the changes in union rule books that the union bureaucrats will be demanding to meet the terms of the Act. ■

TUUAP Conference
Tel. 375760 for details